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Cal State East Bay: Sustaining momentum toward fuller regional status and recognition

Author: Norma S. Rees

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As many in our community have heard, I recently recommended a new regional name for the university: California State University, East Bay.

Before making this decision, I considered the input of a wide range of constituents. I also reflected upon the university's recent achievements and newfound momentum: major new construction under way on the Hayward campus; designation by the Princeton Review as a "Best Western" college; and selection as home for a new East Bay Biotechnology Center are just a few examples.

In the end, I based my decision on three factors, all aimed at furthering our regional vision for the future of the university. I want the community to understand them clearly. First, the academic and fiscal health of the university requires that we find new ways for our enrollment to grow. Despite tremendous growth in our region (Alameda and Contra Costa counties now have a combined population of almost 2.5 million), Cal State Hayward never reached its full potential and planned enrollment. To secure the enrollment growth needed to justify faculty, staff and program expansion, we must not only recruit more effectively, but more broadly.

Unfortunately, as we reach further into our region and beyond we find that our name causes confusion. It misrepresents our location and does not communicate a regional university with two campuses in two counties, committed to serving all 33 cities in our region.

Consequently, I believe the name Cal State East Bay would support our regional recruitment objectives in ways our current name cannot.

Second, the long-term financial viability of the university demands increased donor support.

Yet, philanthropists have pointed out that our name is an impediment to wider donor recognition by failing to communicate our regional role and relevancy. If we hope to provide the new programs and facilities our students deserve - despite declining state funding - we must make a clear case for broad private financial support throughout our region. I am convinced the name Cal State East Bay not only communicates this worthiness but would also serve as an important asset in this effort.

Third, our ability to achieve regional standing depends in large part upon the ability to further develop our Concord campus. We have now initiated a comprehensive planning effort to expand our offerings in Contra Costa. But in discussions with area constituents and elected representatives, we learned that our name is a perceptual barrier to the full

support needed for success in this effort. A more inclusive name - Cal State East Bay - is critical in signaling our earnest commitment to serve the growing higher education needs of this region.

As president, my responsibility is to pave the way for the university to realize its full potential and to assume its rightful position among peer institutions. While I regret that some have misinterpreted my decision, I am committed to doing what I believe is best for the future of the university.

This does not mean we are distancing ourselves from Hayward. We will remain as deeply involved in the life of the community as we have always been. We will continue to support local schools, city government, chamber of commerce and community organizations. More importantly, Hayward will remain home to the largest campus of a growing and more widely recognized and acclaimed university, bringing even greater credit to the city.

Norma S. Rees is president of California State University, Hayward